

THE SEVEN DWARFS, EACH ON HIS DEATHBED, REMEMBER
SNOW WHITE

Sleepy: I wanted to get her into the feathers alright, but just to snooze. I tried to make her understand that, but oh no. Always the raised eyebrow and wagging finger.

Dopey: When she turned up, I knew she wouldn't stay. When she fell asleep like that, I knew it wouldn't last. By acting dopey I got out of a lot of work but really I'm as sharp as the next guy.

Grumpy: Snow White? I barely remember. Besides, what did she know about chronic pain. I believe she danced, but you couldn't prove it by me. Every night I was in bed early, doubled up.

Doc: Snow White worried about her health and about getting old. She was tyrannical about physical examinations; once a week was nothing. Of course a woman her size and complexion was exciting, but I soon got used to it.

Bashful: We didn't have a t.v. so the others used to turn off the lights and make me blush. She could make me beet red, just like that. Or at first she could. After a while she had to get downright bold. And she liked saying those things too. I could tell.

Happy: She made very little difference to me. I was always happy. I was then, I still am. Even now. I imagine I'm ill. Mentally ill, I mean.

Sneezy: I was the most handsome of us all, less gnarled, my limbs in more pleasing proportion. But my nose runs constantly and my eyes water. She preferred me until I sneezed on her fancy dress then let me tell you, handsome or not, that was that.

PRONOUNCING MY NAME

When someone leans in and says, "Koehurch? Curcheese? Curgoo?" I just nod. Believe me, it's easier.

When someone wipes his brow and asks, "What the hell kind of name is that, anyway?" I say that it's probably German. Like Goethe.

Whom I used to refer to casually as, in high school, I also let it be known that my great great grandparents, being modest immigrants, had simply dropped the titled Von. Actually I was an aristocrat. Sure, Ronald Von Koertge The Twerp.

"Coeur," said Robert one day. "Maybe it's French." Could it be Ronald Heart, like in sweetheart? How wonderful. What did the Germans invent, anyway, but anal retentiveness.

But the French, they drink wine all the time and think nudity is okay. Now I can stop worrying that I would have looked good in a long leather coat. I have a great new hometown, France. Where, by the way, my great great great great grandfather invented the sweetest kiss of them all.

LAST MINUTE CHANGE OF PLANS

Cherry and I were going up the Club House elevator when she said, "Boy, I could find you anywhere in the world."

"How's that?" I ask idly, keeping my nose in a tough grass race for fillies and mares.

"I'd just go to the nearest track."

"What nearest track."

"Fairmount down the hill from your folks' house. Or the one in Tucson. Or Centennial, you liked Denver."

"Tracks are big places. You'd never catch me."

"Ha. You always go to the paddock. I'd just hang around there. You'd show up."

She studied Spanish while I messed around with deuces till there was a race I could bet. Now and then I would look over and smile, but I was thinking about sweet Julie in white shorts packing and, at this very moment, writing a note to her dumbfounded parents.